



It's a women's word at Georgetown Terminal Warehouse where a mother and two daughters, Brenda Sisnett, Norma Elliott and Lois Elliott, the active hardworking bosses, make sure the business stays all in the family and business increases each year.

Georgetown Terminal Warehouse

Three women run it all

by Anne Currie
Just finished reading "Mommie Dearest" that tale of filial devotion about Joan Crawford, or "Chesapeake" another lengthy epic by Michener? If so, these paperbacks came to Canada through Georgetown Terminal Warehouse, the sole Canadian supplier for six large publishing houses.

The title of another best-seller "Women's Room" could aptly describe the 50,000 square foot operation where women run the whole show, and a mother and two daughters own and run the business, with the help of 55 women staff members, and five badly outnumbered men.

Mother Norma Elliott and daughters Lois Elliott and Brenda (Sisnett), are no mere figureheads presiding over an operation started by husband and father John Elliott, a former reeve and councillor, who died in February, 1978. They are the active hardworking bosses who run every detail of the business, which has increased in volume from the handling of eight million books two years ago to 18 million in 1979.

"They go into shock" is the way Lois, a dainty slim 25 year old blonde, describes the reaction of sellers of fork lifts, metal shelving and huge lad-

ders, when they ask who's in charge of purchasing this equipment and she replies demurely, "I am." She says it's fun being a woman in a business people expect to be run by men. Now used to the idea of the three women making all the decisions, some of their US clients call them the "baby dolls" and two more attractive young women would be difficult to find.

The comradeship and sense of achievement seems to carry over to the women working in the warehouse where shelving, stacked with books runs 27 feet to the ceiling. Here they watch the best-seller charts posted by Lois to see how "their" publisher is doing.

The women become possessive about "their" publisher since each of the six publishers is allotted an area, a supervisor and staff and work only on these publishers, developing a remarkable memory for book numbers, location and copies in stock.

Most of the women work part-time, having flexible hours between 9 and 3.30 so mothers with children find the hours ideal for them.

The family atmosphere is carried over to the students who work from 4 until 8 p.m. since most are children of staff.

In this streamlined

operation with everything geared to speed the handling, the books come in the door and are out again within a maximum of 48 hours, but most frequently the deadline is 24 hours.

The fast turn-over results in blitz days, such as the battle-cry this is "Mommie Dearest" day, the day when that best seller must go to every store in the competitive area of Toronto. It must be received on the same day by all the stores, so one does not have the advantage.

In the Toronto, Hamilton, Kitchener area Georgetown Terminal Warehouse owns trucks driven by women do the blitz deliveries. Buying their own trucks for close-in areas was Lois' brainchild, said Norma.

To other areas various types of transportation are used, but no matter where in the country from the Yukon to Newfoundland the bestsellers are received at the same time by the simple but efficient expedient of shipping the farthest spots first, and following that pattern across the country.

It is an everyday occurrence to have three tractor trailer trucks, apart from their vehicles, sitting at the loading docks, "being

filled up as shipments are ready. An unbelievable six tractor trailer loads of Chesapeake came in and went out of this local business. The pride on their operation shows in this statement, "Of the top 15 best-sellers last year we supplied seven," said Brenda.

However, the key to this whole operation, without which the speed of handling could not function, is the Elliott Custom Brokers and Storage Company, housed in the same building, but under the control of the RCMP.

Both Brenda and Lois are licensed custom brokers, no mean achievement for two young women. The books are cleared through customs right there and then sorted, counted, and started on the process which sees them travel across the country. The combination of custom and distribution warehouse in one location is rare with only about three in Canada. Custom clearance is not only a benefit to Georgetown Terminal Warehouse but to the whole town, since about 60 to 70 per cent of the custom clearances is their books but the remainder serves all industries in town.

The women also oper-

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